

*Chapter 15*New Bridge and the Causeway.

New Bridge is situated about one mile south of Bishops Tawton spanning the river Taw, joining Bishops Tawton parish to Tawstock parish via the road. The oldest date I have found confirming the fact of a bridge being situated over the river Taw in this area is 1326. This I found in James Coulter's book titled "Tawstock and the Lords of the Manor". To bring us up to 1809 regarding bridges at this point, I will state a few facts from Jim's book.

Apparently a Bishop Stapleton left 60 shillings for the repair of the new bridge near Bishops Tawton in his will dated 1326. Bishops Tawton was at that time an episcopal manor, and Bishop Lacey granted an indulgence for New Bridge. It appears this bridge was demolished in 1643 during the civil war. Some 2 years later there was concern by the lack of a bridge over the river Taw at this point. However a bridge must have been built, because the next record about a bridge appeared in 1803 when the County was questioned about the lack of maintenance, one of the three spans had been washed away by the river. The bridge was rebuilt sometime in 1804 - 1808, but in 1809 it was washed away during a flood.

A new bridge was built on a site about a hundred yards up stream from the old bridge which included a realignment of the road. On the Tawstock side of the bridge the road sloped off gradually down to an acceptable level over the marsh to match up with the existing road. The bridge and the approach road over the marsh worked well in ordinary weather conditions, but with heavy rainfall and the fact the tide almost reached New Bridge, the marshes would be flooded. The heavy fresh water would be held back by the tide thus flooding the marshes and the approach road.

I have been told of instances when people became stranded in the water at New Bridge, local people would help to rescue them from the flood water by horse and cart. One such a man was Jack Andrew who used to live close by at Pludmore on the Tawstock side. He would drive his horse and cart into the water and rescue people. Arthur Parr of Harepie told me when he was a boy 12 years old he would take his fathers horse, accompanied by his mate George Sparkes of Rollestone down to New Bridge when it was flooded. One of them would ride on the back of the horse and wade into the water and offer to bring the stranded people through on horse back. On one occasion they went down when it was flooded and there was a man stranded in the water with his car. They waded through the water on horse back towards the stranded car. They could not reach the car as the water was too deep. On each side of the road was a post and rail fence, so Arthur started to climb along the railings to reach the man. The man started to climb along the railings towards Arthur.